



Fellow Arkansans,

Our producers have been hit hard by severe weather this year. As Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I have been working closely with the Governor's office to ensure disaster declarations are declared for affected counties.

This week, I, along with members of the delegation, called on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary to designate [26 Arkansas counties](#) as Secretarial Disaster counties. This designation would allow farmers and ranchers whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by the record rain and extensive flooding to be eligible for emergency loans.

After our producers have completed harvest, we will have a better idea as to the full extent of the damage. However, in a recent one-on-one meeting with Secretary Vilsack, I shared my deep concern that more help may be needed. In the past, the Department of Agriculture has used existing authority to provide crop loss and livestock assistance to producers when the safety net has fallen short.

Because the disaster program included in the Farm Bill has not yet been implemented and any help provided under that program for 2009 will be delayed for at least a year, I believe USDA must be prepared to act when and where necessary to bridge the gap in the safety net. In the past, when USDA has waited for Congressional approval of ad hoc disaster assistance, debate over the legislation and USDA implementation have simply taken too long.

The bottom line is that all options must be on the table in lending a helping hand to our producers when and where needed.

With Arkansas Pride,

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